

“FARMERS’ VIEW ON PRIVATIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT (A.P.)”

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ABSTRACT

The present extension system has ultimatum for reshaping and strengthening the structural design for the delivery of agricultural technology and services as needed by the farming community. As the ratio of extension worker-farmer is 1: 2000 (Gautam et al, 2006). There is a colossal demand of extension worker in the era of knowledge and information. In order to counteract the demand of public extension workers other institutions like NGOs and private sectors can support and counterpart the public extension system. The study was conducted in Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh purposively for investigating socio-economic status and the association of independent variables with farmers’ attitude towards Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services both at beneficiary level and service provider level. A total of 120 respondents comprising 77 beneficiaries and 43 non beneficiaries were selected purposively as a sample for the present investigation. The data collection was started through Key informant Group Discussion (KGD) including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Household survey by using pre-structured interview schedule, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with checklists and finally case studies. Chi-square test was applied to find out the association between farmers attitude with independent variables. The major findings of the study were the socio-economic status of the respondents was found to be of medium level, the attitude of the respondents towards Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services i.e., PESP (Private Extension Service Providers) had significant association with the income, social participation and mass media exposure. From the study, it is clear that Privatization of Agricultural Extension Services has become essential in our country to increase the competitiveness in the world and give justice to our farmers. At the same time, it requires great caution about problems and constraints emerged in privatization of extension services.

KEYWORDS: Privatization, PESP, Anantapur, Co-Operative Approach

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INTRODUCTION

India is a large country with a geographical area 329 million ha of which 69 million ha (22.5 per cent) are under forest, 42 million ha are (13.7 per cent) not available for cultivation and about 28 million ha (9.4 per cent) are not under cultivation. One hundred and forty-two million ha of land are under cultivation of which only 53 million ha are irrigated.

Agriculture is the most important sector of the Indian economy. It contributes about 25 per cent of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides employment to about 67 per cent of the working population of the country. The food grain production of the country has increased fourfold during the last five decades.

However, despite being self-sufficient in the production of food grains farmers are unable to obtain remunerative prices for their farm produce. With the sustained efforts of the Government of India (GOI), there has been continuous increase in quantity and quality of farm produce due to the provision of farm support services especially to small/marginal farmers.

The Green Revolution has been the foundation of India's agricultural achievement, transforming the country from one of food deficient to self-sufficient (Anonymous 2001). India owes a lot to its scientists and extension workers in making the country self-sufficient in case of food grains production, taking the benefits of green revolution (Reddy and Rao, 2001). Many serious problems for agriculture sector are heavy demand for food, declining cultivated area due to population pressure, stagnating agricultural productivity due to natural resource degradation, increased competition in international markets, poor irrigation and water management, environmental deterioration, inadequate development of agro-processing units and inadequate marketing of agricultural products, etc. Though, agriculture sector contributes about 24.7 per cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) and provides employment to about 57% of the total work force (Sulaiman et al. 2003). However, this places greater responsibility on the agricultural extension sector, since it is a vital channel for proper dissemination and adoption of new agricultural technologies to farmers as well as a channel back to researchers and policy makers regarding farmers' problems, needs and concerns.

India chases the world in reforming its extension and research systems. There are many developing countries where extension and advisory services reforms are occurring globally. India is one of the developing country where decentralization of the extension systems carried out based on agro-ecological conditions and access to markets. Since the nature of Indian agriculture was changing with; shrinkage of resources like land, water and human resource for extension system, changes in demand and consumption pattern of the Indian population, changes in the farming system and farming pattern, decline in the public investments towards agriculture, International developments like Globalisation, Liberalisation and Privatization. All these changes drag the researchers and policymakers to reform and reshape the public extension system as a public private partnership entity where the government works along with or distribute a part of work/ activities to the private sector for effective extension delivery system. Despite the fact that public extension system was reformed there may occur some problems at farmers' level. India with vast population under marginal and small land holdings some objections may confronted from small and marginal farmers of the nation.

Keeping the points stated above the present study was undertaken in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh with the following objectives:

- To determine the socio-economic status of the respondents.
- To evaluate the association between independent variables and attitude of farmers towards Privatization of Extension Service Providers (PESP).

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Due to the large number of Revenue mandals in the district, the potential limitation of the study was that it was concentrated only on two purposive samples of Revenue mandals. Moreover, lack of information at the grass root level and update in a timely manner constituted a major limitation for the study. The study also limited in depth owing to time and financial availability.

Finally, it is important to note that India is diversified in agro-ecological, socio-economic, and cultural environment, and the study being location specific in nature, its results may not be generalized to the zonal or regional

level with blind recommendation. However, the recommendations and policy implications of the study can be used for the areas of similar contexts and as a basis for further studies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Anantapur District was selected purposively for my research investigation because it is one of the largest districts in the A.P. and there are so many private organizations providing extension services on little bit payment basis. These private organizations were working collectively with the two Govt. Agricultural Research Stations (Rekulakunta, Reddipalle) which were located in the Anantapur District for the delivery of Agricultural information and Services to the farmers in order to achieve profit earning farming system rather than subsistence farming system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

• Sampling Procedure

This section describes the approaches and methods employed for data collection and analysis. The first sub-section of this chapter presents the description of the study area. Then the details of methodology used to conduct the overall study were discussed in subsequent sub-sections.

In this study, descriptive research design was followed in order describe demographic characteristics. Andhra Pradesh state was selected purposively because more public-private sectors are working for upliftment of the Socio-economic condition of the rural families. The Anantapur District was selected purposively for research investigation because it is one of the largest districts in the A.P. and there are so many private organizations providing extension services on little bit payment basis. The District has 5 Revenue Divisions viz., Anantapur, Dharmavaram, Kadiri, Kalyandurg and Penukonda divisions. These divisions are further divided into 63 Mandals. Anantapur Division comprises of 20 mandals, out of which two mandals were selected purposively because there are two Agricultural Research Stations (Rekulakunta, Reddipalle) were located through which few private organizations were working collectively to uplift the status of the small and marginal farmers. The list of villages under the selected Revenue Mandals was collected with help of Mandal Development officer. Five villages were selected purposively since the time period is limited. The list of farmers in selected villages who have benefitted from PESP was procured from the Agricultural officer. It was found that total 748 farmers have benefitted from PESP who are distributed in the villages Narpala, Bathalapalli, D. cherlopalli, Venkatampalli and Chamaluru. 77 farmers from the list were selected by following proportionate random sampling method. In order to compare with PESP beneficiary farmers 43 non-beneficiary farmers from the same villages were selected. Following is the details of sample selected for the study.

Table 1: Selection of Villages and Respondents

Sl. No.	Selected Villages	Beneficiaries	Non-Beneficiaries
1.	Narpala	16	9
2.	Bathalapalli	15	8
3.	D. Cherlopalli	16	9
4.	Venkatampalli	14	8
5.	Chamaluru	16	9
	Total	77	43
	Grand Total	120	

- **Data Sources and Data Types**

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. The primary qualitative data were gathered from focused group discussion, key informant's interviews, and informal discussions with individuals and personal observations. The primary quantitative data were also generated through interview with the sample householders. In addition, relevant secondary data were collected from available reports from Agricultural officers and NGOs; records from providers, government policies and strategies documents from Anantapur district Govt. Site survey, and internet websites. More emphasis was given to the qualitative data to capture all relevant information required and to have an in-depth insight of the problem under analysis and have the potential to cover wide aspects of service delivery and are easy to use in schedules for research work.

- **Instrument used for Data Collection**

The information was elicited from the respondents with the help of pre-structured interview schedule. The tentatively prepared schedule was advocated in a non-sample area to test the relevancy and practicability. Based on the experience gained the schedule was modified wherever needed and finalized.

- **Method of Data Collection**

The primary data were collected through personal interview technique with the help of pre-tested structured interview schedule besides interaction with the key informants and group discussion. The secondary data were also obtained from State Department of Agriculture and relevant published materials. The investigator personally met the respondents and explained the purpose. The required data were recorded in the schedule.

- **Methods of Data Analysis**

Quantitative data collected from the Household survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The responses to the raw quantitative data were coded and stored using Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in order to avoid respondent anonymity. They were summarized while qualitative responses were tallied and finally prioritized in order to determine trends and patterns in the data and draw conclusions. It were also described, analyzed and interpreted on the spot during data collection to avoid missing of relevant information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- **Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents**

Table 2: Socio-Economic Profile Characteristics of the Respondent. n = 120

Sl. No.	Socioeconomic Profile Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age (in year)		
	Young (25-35)	90	75.00
	Middle (36-45)	28	23.33
	Old (46-55)	02	1.67
2.	Gender		
	Male	108	90.00
	Female	12	10.00
3.	Education		
	Illiterate	39	32.50
	Primary	24	20.00
	Secondary	32	26.67
	Intermediate	16	13.33
	Graduate and above	09	7.50

Table 2: Contd.,			
4.	Occupation		
	Agriculture	103	85.83
	Agricultural labour	17	14.17
5.	Annual Income (₹)		
	20,000- 30,000	14	11.67
	30,001- 40,000	78	65.00
	40,001- 50,000	12	10.00
	50,001- 60,000	16	13.33
6.	Farm size (area in acre)		
	Marginal farmer (<2 acre)	34	28.33
	Small farmer (2-5 acre)	59	49.17
	Large farmer (>5 acre)	27	22.50
7.	Family type		
	Nuclear	109	90.83
	Joint	11	9.17
8.	Family size		
	Upto 5 members	106	88.33
	Above 5 members	14	11.67
9.	Social participation		
	Member of one organization	58	48.33
	Member of more than one organization	28	23.33
	No Membership	34	28.34
10.	Mass media exposure		
	Radio	19	15.83
	T.V	16	13.33
	Newspaper	13	10.84
	Radio + T.V	28	23.33
	Radio + T.V + Newspaper	36	30.00
	Magazines/Journals	08	6.67

From the table 2.the results depicted as followed:

Majority of the respondents (75.00 %) comes under young age group i.e., 25-35 years followed by 23.33 per cent were of middle age group and only 1.67 per cent respondents were of old age group. Similar findings was reported by Sridhar (2002).

Majority (90.00%) of the respondents were male and only 10.00 per cent respondents were female. Therefore it is concluded that most of the respondents were male.

About 32.50 per cent of the respondents were Illiterate followed by 26.67 per cent secondary level, 20.00 per cent primary educated, 13.33 per cent intermediate level and only 7.50 per cent Graduate and above. Similar findings was reported by Marilingannavar and Manjunath (1992).

Majority of the respondents (85.33%) occupation was Agriculture and only 14.17 per cent of respondents occupation was as agricultural labour. Therefore it is concluded that most of the respondents primary occupation was agriculture solely.

Majority of the respondents (65.00%) were earning annual income of 30,001 - 40,000 ₹ followed by 13.33 per cent of the respondents were earning 50,001 – 60,000 ₹ next to that 11.67 per cent of respondents were earning income of 20,000 – 30,000 ₹ and only 10.00 per cent of respondents were earning annual income of 40,001 – 50,000 ₹. In so doing, it is concluded that most of the respondents were earning 30,001 - 40,000 ₹ per annum.

Almost majority of the respondents (49.17%) were holding 2-5 acre farm size followed by 28.33 per cent of the respondents were holding less than 2 acre farm size and only 22.50 per cent respondents were holding more than 5 acre

farm size. Thereby it is concluded that most of the respondents were falling under small farmers category. Similarly Madhavreddy (2001) reported that 35.00 per cent of the respondents were marginal farmers, 26.60 per cent were small farmers and 21.80 per cent were medium farmers.

Majority (90.83%) of the respondents was of nuclear family type and least (9.17%) was of joint family type.

Most of the respondents (88.33%) family size was upto 5 members and least was above 5 members (11.67%).

About 48.33 per cent of the respondents were member of one organization and taking participation in social activities followed by 28.33 per cent was not taking part in any social activities. And only 23.33 per cent were member of one organization. Similar findings were found by Sakharkar (1995).

Around 30.00 per cent of the respondents were exposed to combination of Radio, T.V and Newspaper and the least (6.67%) exposed to magazines/Journals. Similar findings were found by Maraddi (1999).

• Socio- Economic Status

Socio-economic status was defined as the position of an individual in family occupied with reference to the prevailing average standards of cultural possessions, effective income, material possessions and participation in the community (Chapin, 1928).

The socio-economic status in the present study was measured with the help of a scale developed by Venkataramaiah (1983).

Table 3: Overall Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents. n = 120

Sl. No.	Socioeconomic Status	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (10-44)	34	28.33
2.	Medium (45-78)	72	60.00
3.	High (79-112)	14	11.67
	Total	120	100.00

From the table 3 results inferred that majority of the respondents (60.00%) had medium Socio-economic status. 28.33 per cent in low and only 11.67 per cent respondents had high level of Socio-economic status.

Table 4: Attitude Score of the Respondents Towards PESP. n = 120

Sl. No.	Levels	Score
1.	Least favorable (≤ 46)	14
2.	Moderate favorable (47-92)	6
3.	Highly favorable (≥ 93)	8

From the table 4 it is clear that most of the respondents have least favourable attitude towards PESP followed by highly favorable and the last is moderately favorable. The above finding was in conformity with research finding of Naik (1994) and sureshkumar (1997).

- Association between Independent Variables and Attitude of Farmers Towards Private Extension Service Providers

Table 5: Association between Independent Variables and Attitude of Farmers towards PESP.n = 120

Characteristics/ Category	Score	PESP- BF N=77	PESP- NBF N=43	χ^2
		F(P)	F(P)	
Age				
Young	<40	57 (47.50)	33 (27.50)	1.14NS
Middle	41-50	18 (15.00)	10 (8.33)	
Old	>51	2 (1.67)	0 (0.00)	
Education				
Low	Upto 6th	38 (31.67)	26 (21.60)	1.93NS
Medium	7th-12th	31 (25.83)	15 (12.50)	
High	Above 12th	8 (6.67)	2 (1.67)	
Occupation				
Agriculture		66 (53.33)	30 (27.5)	4.38*
Agricultural labour		11 (8.33)	13 (10.83)	
Annual Income				
Low	<34	19 (15.83)	6 (5.00)	6.78*
Medium	35-56	32 (26.67)	12 (10.00)	
High	>56	26 (21.67)	25(20.83)	
Farm size				
Small farmer	<2 acre	21 (17.50)	5 (4.17)	4.17NS
Medium farmer	2-5 acre	32 (26.60)	20 (16.67)	
Big farmer	>5 acre	24 (20.00)	18 (15.00)	
Social participation				
Low	<44	16 (13.33)	12 (10.00)	9.24*
Medium	45-51	32 (26.67)	26 (21.67)	
High	>51	29 (24.17)	5 (4.17)	
Mass media exposure				
Low	<36	33 (27.50)	4 (3.33)	16.74*
Medium	37-42	19 (15.83)	11 (9.17)	
High	>42	25 (20.83)	28 (23.33)	

In the table the values in the parenthesis indicate percentage.

NS- Non significant * - significant at 5%

The above table indicates that the association between independent variables and attitude of the farmers by applying Chi-square (χ^2) test. After the test the results implied that Age ($\chi^2 = 1.14$), Education ($\chi^2 = 1.94$), and Farm size ($\chi^2 = 4.17$) did not influence the attitude of the respondents since the calculated χ^2 value of the variables are less than the tabulated χ^2 value at 5% at 2 d.f. Then Occupation ($\chi^2 = 4.38$), Annual Income ($\chi^2 = 6.78$), Social participation ($\chi^2 = 9.24$), and Mass Media Exposure ($\chi^2 = 16.74$) exerted the influence over the attitude of respondents since the calculated χ^2 value of the variables are greater than the tabulated χ^2 value at 5% at 2 d.f. except for Occupation where d.f is 1. These findings were in line with Fotiet *al.* (2007) who reported that the degree of commercialization of farm enterprises; farmer income, farmer location, farm size and attitude of the farmer significantly affect the demand for private fee-for-service extension in Zimbabwe. A similar study was conducted in Srilanka by Rohana (2005), and reported that the majority of the farmers agreed that commercialization is not desirable in the interest of poor farmers, big population of small and marginal farmers and will lead to socio-economic inequality and regional imbalances. It is argued that the small and poor farmers are unlikely to gain much benefit due to resource constraints and limited coverage of the private extension services. Therefore, public extension system cannot be replaced by private extension system (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2003).

However, there are chances that privatization might increase regional and resource imbalance, since this concentrate mainly on areas having high potential resources and also they give importance to big farmers. The above findings founds conformity with the reports of Bloome (1993), Ameer (1994), Sulaiman and Gadewar (1994) and Van Den Ban (1995).

CONCLUSIONS

After collecting, processing, analyzing and interpreting the data the whole scenario is concluded as the socio-economic status of the respondents constitutes medium level. There is a positive association between attitude of the respondents and independent variables like occupation, annual income, social participation and mass media exposure. The public extension system is over burdened with numerous activities and there should be some phase wise shifting to private sector for effective implementation of essential extension services.

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